THE GUIDEON

National Newsletter of VVAW

Number 110 **Winter 1991**

Outpatient Cuts at Milwaukee VA

By: John Zutz

In a memo dated the day after independence day, the Zablocki Veterans Affairs Medica Center (VAMC) declared itself free of non-service connected outpatients.. Follow up memos show that not only will no new patients be admitted into clinics, but established patients will be discharged, and those needing the most service will be the first to go. Unconfirmed reports indicate that service-connected veterans are facing many of the same obstacles.

The cuts, which administrators hint will end with the start of a new budget year, will most likely continue unless the hospital's current $118 million budget is increased considerably. Though hospital heads have tried to give the actions a low profile in the local media, internal VA memos detail the depths of the service cuts.

After waving the flag on the Fourth of July federal holiday, and welcoming back thousands of newly created Desert Storm veterans, VA Center Director Russ Struble, and Chief of Staff Dr. Thomas Garthwaite sent a July 5th memo to all physicians and affiliated department chairmen stating that a "critical budgetary situation" was in effect due to a number of events, including; health care inflation, increased pharmacy costs, removal of pay caps, high requirements of specialty surgery patients from N. Chicago, partially funded cardiac surgery patients from Westside VAMC, and inpatient funding reductions for the coming year, with other fundings not keeping pace with requirements.

The memo contends that, "Traditionally, we have been generous in interpreting VA rules concerning eligibility for care," and though it warns that "this plan alone will be unlikely to save sufficient resources," it continues to outline the far reaching cuts.

The immediate plan is to develop criteria to "enforce strict eligibility for outpatient care." These criteria will "decrease [the number of] veterans who are followed to 'obviate the need for hospitalization.'" (Webster defines "obviate" as "to meet or anticipate and dispose of; make unnecessary. Syn. See Prevent.") Doctors are instructed to "eliminate entry of low priority veterans" into the clinic system, "prevent re-entry of patients," and "turn away veterans who are coming here only for prescriptions."

The memo goes on to hint that staff reductions will be necessary, but states that the center will "continue to provide quality care and maintain it's excellent training programs."

This outline would be ominous enough, but shortly after, on July 15th, the Associate Chief of Staff / Ambulatory Care Dr. James Byrd supplied some of the fine points in a memo to all physicians. He ordered that "Non Service-Connected veterans will not be referred to new clinics whether they are new or established patients."

He goes on to order doctors that "when you consider discharging the patient from your clinic you should consider discharging the patient from all clinics." This seems to indicate that a patient being seen, and subsequently discharged from, say the dermatology clinic, could also be discharged from the orthopedic, cardiac, or other clinics as well.

But Byrd's memo goes further to order that, "In addition to discharging simple patients (1 or 2 problems, 1 or 2 medications), we must also discharge complex patients who are heavy users of VA services." This in effect dumps the veterans who are the sickest and need help the most, out of the hospital supposedly specialized to help them, to search for help in the community. This comes at a time when local resources (read state, county, and city funds) are stretched to the limit. But don't worry, the memo continues, "Additional social workers are being assigned to assist with this process."

In a second July 15th memo, Dr. Byrd ordered Ambulatory Care and Emergency Room physicians to help decrease patient rolls. New Non Service-Connected veterans "should be referred to a community physician and receive limited prescriptions."

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MILWAUKEE VA

continued from front page

These memos would seem to indicate a rather free wheeling approach to deciding who should receive medical care. However, in a July 17 letter to Senator Herb Kohl, Director Struble insisted that "only patients that are considered stable will be discharged." And that "social workers will assist in finding community resources if needed " to care for the discharged vets.

A Sept. 6th Milwaukee Journal front page article, which tended to downplay the cuts, projected that 214,000 outpatient visits, and 10,000 inpatient admissions would be made the same as last year.

Veterans seeking medical help at the Milwaukee VAMC are in the process of falling through the "safety net." They will soon be needing help from those nebulous "thousand points of light" which are assumed to exist in their community. Veterans at the hospital were reluctant to talk on the record. Veterans groups in general have little hope for increasing the VA budget, they are busily, and somewhat unsuccessfully, trying to keep it from being cut further.

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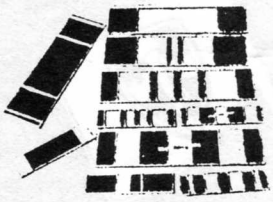

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'Be the first one on your block to have your tape come home in a box.'

The Guideon

The Guideon is the national newsletter of VVAW. It is a supplement to *The Veteran* and meant to inform and present issues and events that our member may find important. Members are encouraged to submit articles, events, poems, drawings and photos.

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PO Box 408594, Chicago, IL 60640.

500 YEARS: Rethinking Columbus

The 500th anniversary of Christopher Columbus's landing in the western hemisphere is to be celebrated this coming year. $89 million in federal appropriations is for the U.S. Columbus Quincentennial Commission for various activities related to the commemoration. Needless to say, this has stirred up much controversy.

Columbus was portrayed as a hero to those of us who grew up in America. He opened the doors to this hemisphere, expanded European civilization, proved the world was round, etc. George Washington is the only figure in U.S. history to have more places named after him than Columbus. More monuments have been erected to Columbus than any other secular figure in the world. It took a great deal of courage to undertake such a voyage as his, but this is ridiculous.

We should take the occasion of the 500th anniversary to reeducate ourselves and our children to history. Columbus shouldn't be deified, but seen for who he was. His voyage ultimately led to 500 years of genocide, land theft, forced assimilation of the Indians and pollution of our environment.

The purpose of Columbus's voyage was to search for gold and spices. The inhabitants of the Caribbean were enslaved and forced to mine gold for their white masters. Resisters were tortured and killed. New diseases brought by the Europeans coupled with massacres led to the extinction of indigenous peoples of the Caribbean.

Columbus's journal gives us a picture of his initial encounters with the natives: "They... brought us parrots and balls of cotton and spears and many other things, which they exchanged for the glass beads and hawks' bells... Because I saw, as I recognize, that these people are very gentle and do not know what it is to be wicked, or to kill others, or to steal, and are unwarlike and so timorous that a hundred of them would run from one of our people... They would make fine servants... with 50 men they would be all kept in subjection and forced to do whatever may be wished."

We have always been taught history from the white European perspective. But we aren't only white Europeans. We are Native American, African-American, Asian-American, Puerto Rican, Chicano, Latin American and white. All perspectives must be taken into account when teaching our history. One sided European American perspectives lead to colonialist thinking. It rationalizes our ignoring treaty rights and intervention in Third World affairs. (Vietnam?)

If we continue to teach our children distorted, revisionist history they will get the idea that it's okay to take other's land if you are stronger. There is a difference between coexisting and subjugating. A true picture of our past may provide a brighter future.

New Reference Guide

A group of educators has recently published a reference guide on alternative views to Columbus to give students a clearer picture of the encounter. It is called *Rethinking Columbus*. It can be obtained from: Rethinking Schools, 1001 Keefe Av., Milwaukee, WI, 53212, 414-964-9646.

—Dave Kettenfhofen

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Madison Veterans Day: War Not the Answer

On Nov. 11th, the Madison Chapter of VVAW put on its 9th annual Veterans' Day Memorial Ceremony at the Capitol Rotunda in Madison. The Ceremony included an honor guard procession, candle lighting, several speakers, music, and Native American dancing.

John Lindquist and John Zutz of VVAW-Milwaukee were among the speakers. They brought up concerns for the homeless veterans, unemployment, VA medical care cuts and the push for normalization of relations with Vietnam. Mandy Jones, a ninth grader from Madison read the "Constitution of Peace" which demands the right not to have to fight. A representative from the Military Families Support Network gave a Gulf War synopsis and said that war is not the answer to anything.

Muriel Hogan and Jim Wachtendonk did a beautiful job of singing as they do every year. Also the American Indian drummers performed the "Wounded Soldier Song" and "Honor Song" with John Beaudin dancing.

A special award of eagle feathers was given to John Beaudin, a Chippewa/Vietnam veteran. They were given to him by the Madison area Native Americans as a tribute for his work in the community and as a veteran. The ceremony ended with taps and the singing of "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?" as everyone placed flowers on a body bag.

Special Report:

35TH NATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

By Joe Miller

Chicago, October, 1991 – On Saturday, October 12, about twenty people showed up at Barry Romo's place for the National Steering Committee meeting of VVAW. While representatives from the West and East coasts could not get to the meeting, there were people from Milwaukee and other parts of Wisconsin, from Firebase K.C., from Chicago and Champaign, Illinois.

NATIONAL REPORT

The meeting began with a short report on VVAW's national situation. While National VVAW finances are nonexistent, there is generally a good feeling about the organization's continued viability -- at least in terms of members, many of them younger vets, and the national office continues to get calls from people who wish to rejoin after a time of inactivity. The central problem was finances, and members were encouraged to renew their memberships and possibly send regular sustain to the N.O.

Best Wishes
&
Thank You

VVAW salutes long-time leaders

John Lindquist, Anne Bailey
Bill Davis

as they leave their positions as coordinators. Their service and sacrifice have helped us to endure and our indebtedness cannot be measured. We await their ongoing counsel, advice and labor in the continuing struggle for Peace & Justice.

MIDWEST REGION

The National report was followed by a series of local reports. First up, Annie Bailey discussed the situation in Milwaukee and other areas of Wisconsin. She referred to the plan to establish new co-coordinators for the Central region, as she must step down due to health problems. She further reported that the land VVAW uses for its annual 4th of July camp-out has been sold. We will not know for some time if this will hurt future camp-out plans. Annie also referred to the continued cuts in the VA; this remains a central area of concern for VVAW regionally and nationally. Plans are in place for the Veterans Day ceremony in Madison. Alex Molnar, founder of the Family Support Network during the Gulf War, will present the keynote speech. As for funds, Madison has no money. Milwaukee has been unable to send funds to the N.O. due to plans for the upcoming couples trip to Vietnam. On February 15, 1992, the Milwaukee chapter will hold a fund-raiser, the "Rock 'n' roll Massacre," in connection with Valentine's day.

KANSAS CITY

Next, Doc Upton from Firebase K.C. provided a report on the situation there. The Vietnam Veteran Radio Network (VVRN) is currently heard in some parts of Europe. There are half-hour shows that are sent overseas, along with copies of *The Veteran*. There are now four stations inside the United States that also carry these programs, including the alternative station in the African-American community in Springfield, Illinois. Doc also reported on the videotapes currently available from the Kent/Jackson State 20th anniversary and the 20th anniversary of Dewey Canyon III.

Unfortunately, the contacts that were made during the Gulf War in the Kansas City area have dried up. VVRN is also currently fighting a lawsuit stemming from the fact that it has been thrown off the local radio station due to some local politics. There are plans to continue the annual "Operation Christmas Toy," which provides some bit of happiness for the children of incarcerated veterans in the region.

CHICAGO CHAPTER

Ray Parish was asked to report on the Chicago chapter. He referred to his work with the Midwest Committee for Military Counseling during the Gulf War. He also pointed out that Barry and Alynne functioned as two of the central leaders of the Chicago antiwar efforts. Ray then asked Joe from Champaign to report on downstate activities. Joe discussed the work he has been doing with the Progressive Resource/Action Cooperative in the Champaign community and on the campus at the University of Illinois. He referred to the local veterans who had come out to work in opposition to the Gulf War. These included WWII, Korea, And Vietnam-era veterans. In fact, one of the Vietnam vets was an early member of VVAW who had participated in Dewey Canyon III and came along to Washington with VVAW for the 20th anniversary. Recently, efforts have been made to draw in a 12-year Marine vet who served in Beirut and a young African-American, Ranger-trained vet who works with the People of Color Caucus at the University. Joe also mentioned the beginnings of a counter-recruitment campaign in the Urbana-Champaign area over the past year to promote peace and justice issues and regional cooperation.

NEW YORK, RENO, D.C.

To finish up the local reports, Barry provided an overview of the activities of people in New York/New Jersey, Reno, D.C. and the West coast. As an addendum to the local reports, Jay

from Eau Claire, Wisconsin, brought a few chuckles to the group when he described some of the activities he engaged in during the buildup to the Gulf War. For example, he and some friends took a body bag Christmas shopping in the local mall; they also took it to "see" a movie, and had it "interviewed" on local TV. Jay said "We're unpopular." He also talked of work with Native American concerning boat landings and fishing rights.

INTERNATIONAL WORK

Barry then followed with a discussion of VVAW's international work. There were some visitors from Japan in early 1991, who attended some VVAW events. VVAW was interviewed for Italian radio, Mexican, Japanese and Philippine newspapers. In the context of the so-called "New World Order," we must see the role of the U.S. military as being primarily responsible for "dealing with" 3rd World countries that get "uppity." The U.S. is just "toning down."

VVAW's role in the movement against the Gulf War was to help provide stability. We had long term experience to offer, and we helped establish a pro-GI stance inside the movement. Many new activists were born during this period, partially in response to VVAW's role.

When we look to Colombia, we see a secret U.S. base near Bogota. In the Philippines, the U.S. now has three years "free rent" on Subic Bay, with elections coming up in that country next year. In Central America, the involvement of the U.S. with death squad activity continues, and, while Bush will not invade Haiti to restore elected government, he just might decide to invade Cuba soon. In Nicaragua, our friends from the ORD, (Organization for Revolutionary Disabled), former Sandinista soldiers, are now losing their homes and other benefits under the Chamorro regime.

In Southeast Asia, Vietnam is easing its relations with China and going through some historic internal changes. It is now second in Asia in the export of rice. As for the Cambodia settlement, it looks like Pol Pot will be a part of any new government there. Who knows what the consequences might be?

US ECONOMY

There followed a discussion of the U.S. economy. It is clear that, except for people like Dan Rather or Michael Jordan, most people in this country are *not* feeling secure. There are school program cuts across the country. Cuts in VA programs have further imperiled veterans from earlier wars, not to mention those suffering from various problems coming out of the Gulf War. In these horrible economic times, people are looking for something to "feel good" about. This helps explain the short-lived euphoria of the Gulf War.

COUNTER RECRUITMENT

Ray was asked to report on counter-recruitment efforts. He pointed out that the MCMC office now has three veterans serving as staff members. One of the difficulties coming out of the Gulf War is the loss of the "Vietnam syndrome" as a basis for counter-recruitment activities. There seems to be a return to World War II as an image source, which when combined with the "success" of the Gulf War, provides a much more positive image of the military and the idea of "serving" your country in uniform. Ray also talked of the military resisters and reported on the status of some of these cases. Twenty-three of the Marine resisters from Camp Lejeune have now been recognized as prisoners of conscience by Amnesty International. In the discussion which followed, it war reaffirmed that VVAW members should write to and support these and other military resisters.

In this connection, there was some talk about the veterans of the Gulf War and their problems. The government is now requiring some of the activated reservists to pay back some of the money they were paid. Ooops, the government fucked up and "overpaid" these people! Too bad that their lives were totally disrupted and they were sent away from home to support a war for oil. That is no longer the governments concern, however.

They there are the Gulf veterans who have come home to instant parades and yellow ribbons. Many of them are not "proud" of their war, and they have already begun to contact VVAW to find kindred spirits among those who will understand and legitimate their feelings. We must find ways to help those people and get them to speak out and write abut their experiences.

We also engaged in some discussion of the 1992 Quincentennary and VVAW's role in the movement opposed to this "celebration." VVAW

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GULF VETS BARRED FROM GIVING BLOOD

WASHINGTON -- The Pentagon and the nation's largest association of blood banks yesterday banned blood donations from Persian Gulf War veterans and others who have visited the gulf because 22 U.S. soldiers contracted a parasitic disease there.

The disease, leishmania, is transmitted by sandflies and can be treated by intravenous medication. The more serious form of the illness can be fatal if untreated. There are fears that the disease, or a strain of it, could be transmitted by blood transfusion.

Fifteen infected Army servicemen have skin lesions from the less serious form of the disease, the Pentagon said.

The cases are not life-threatening, the Pentagon added.

None of the 22 with the disease donated blood, said Army Col. Charles Oster, chief of infectious diseases at Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

—The Associated Press

25 YEARS

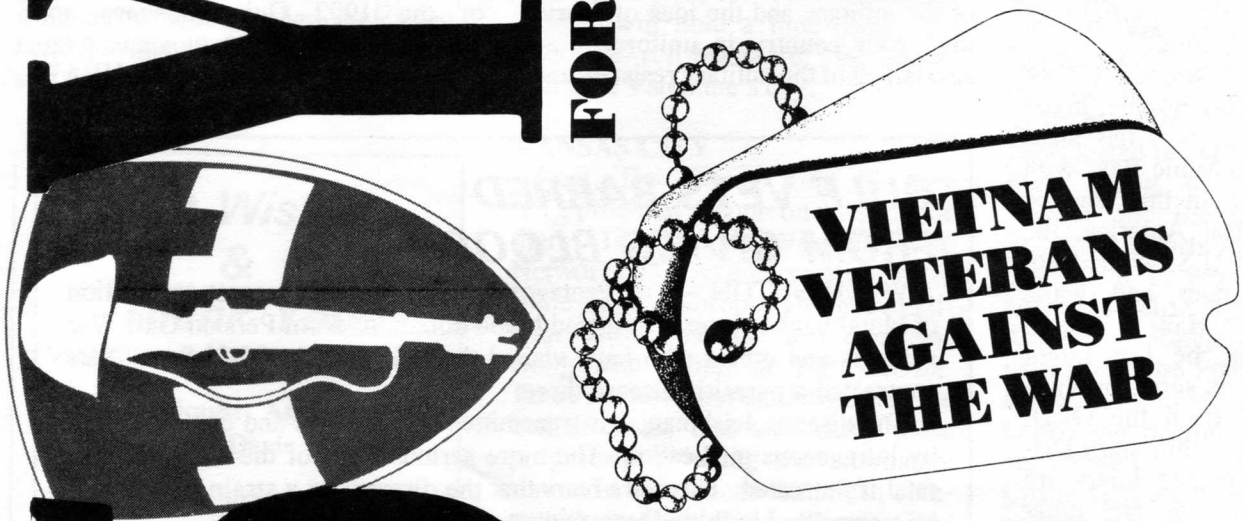
FIGHTING FOR VETERANS, PEACE & JUSTICE

It's hard to believe that 25 years have passed since Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) first lifted a banner in an anti-war demonstration. Veterans, previously unacquainted, united together—eager, war-toughened, bold, idealistic, angry, innocent, young and filled with the urgent necessity to change the course of history. Our mission was nothing less than to end the war we had fought in Vietnam.

And we were, simply, terrific. We marched, lobbied and communed with each other in politically charged veteran's demonstrations and encampments. We defied Richard Nixon and the Justice Department (who sought to discredit us), the Supreme Court and Congress. Yet we welcomed Senators, Representatives and the American public to our encampments, as we eloquently and viscerally testified to our experiences in Vietnam. The country listened to us as we moved to end the war in a peaceful and most dramatic way.

With the help of dedicated professionals, VVAW pioneered work in Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, veteran's rap groups, and treatment and compensation for exposure to Agent Orange. As veterans we reached out to war resisters, working with them for universal and unconditional amnesty. In the past 25 years we've provided draft and registration information to thousands of high school students, sharing with them the realities of war and the military. We've continued to speak out for normalization of relations with Vietnam and against misguided American policies, whether in Central America or the Persian Gulf.

Through thick and thin, high times and low, internal strife, VVAW survives with a renewed sense of mission. Now we mark our 25th anniversary and invite you, your families and all our friends to join the celebration of our collective accomplishments and individual contributions to the fight for veterans, peace and justice.



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Remebering the Past . . . and Anger in the Present:

Disabled vets carried protest signs during New York's Veterans Day Parade ceremonies. They had recently been ousted from their midtown vending spots. Signs included: "Disabled Veterans Denied Equal Protection of the Law in New York City."

—excerpted from New York Daily News

PROTESTERS were a prominent feature of yesterday's Veterans Day Parade. They were angry over ouster of vets from midtown vending spots.
ROBERT ROSAMILIO DAILY NEW

should be seen as a *part* of this movement, and we should not attempt to organize our own events. We should make ourselves available to discuss the question of genocide and our experiences within a system that engages in a continuing process of enemy-making. We should continue to express our support for treaty rights through articles in *The Veteran* and in public speeches.

Eventually, the meeting turned to a discussion of VVAW's 25th anniversary. The New York/New Jersey chapters have taken on the task, and we heard a taped message from Laurie Sandow. They have proposed to hold the event in New York City on May 29-31, 1992. They further proposed to divide up the financial cost in the following manner: NY/NJ—$500.00; VVAW National Office—$500.00; VVAW chapters —$100.00 each. Those present at the Steering Committee meeting were in favor of the projected dates, but questions were raised about the funding proposal. It was agreed the N.O. was not currently in a position to provide the suggested amount.

This brought the focus back to the issue of funding for VVAW. Barry reported that all attempts to get grants had fallen through. He said that some of the potential grant sources felt that, with or without funding, VVAW would manage to stay around just on determination. That comment brought a wry chuckle from the groups around the table. Discussion returned again and again to the problem of how to establish a true national identity for VVAW. Chapters must view themselves as part of the whole and more fully support the national organization through sustaining contributions, fundraisers, etc.

Soon the meeting turned to the election of officers. John Lindquist and Annie Bailey have decided to remove themselves from "formal" national or regional office due to health considerations. As a result the Central region will have two co-coordinators, Jesse Jesperson and John Zutz, who were elected by consensus at this meeting. To replace John Lindquist as National Coordinator, Dave Kettenhofen of Milwaukee was elected to serve as one of four national officers. Bill Davis, who had served as a National Coordinator for many years, decided not to run for that position this time around. Finally, the National Office staff was enlarged by one, so that it now includes Bill Branson, Dave Curry and Joe Miller. In addition, though there is no formal West Coast Chapter of VVAW, Jack McClosky and Eric Schwartz have agreed to serve as Regional contacts for the organization.

Given all the difficulties with VVAW and the fact that it takes at least $1,000.00 and perhaps one hundred hours of work to produce a single issue of *The Veteran*, it was decided to resurrect a National Newsletter. This will be the main medium of communication for the organization for the foreseeable future. All members are encouraged to submit short articles to this publication on a regular basis. Perhaps, as things improve for the National Office, many of these pieces might be the basis for longer discussions in *The Veteran*.

Video series examines impact of war on U.S. & soviet veterans

The Video Project announces its release of *The Wounds of War*, a series of three award-winning documentaries which portray the enduring effects of war on U.S. and Soviet veterans.

Through revealing first-person accounts in three different videos, veterans of World War II, Vietnam and Afghanistan tell how their lives were forever altered by their combat experiences. Though they fought for different countries, the lessons they learned are the same: war can take a heavy toll even on those who survive. *The Wounds of War* goes beyond the heroic myths to take a sobering look at war and its consequences.

In *Soldier's Heart*, Mel Seligman speaks of his youthful patriotic enthusiasm when he stormed the beaches of Normandy as part of the D-Day invasion. Returning four decades later to the tranquil Normandy countryside, Seligman and his family tell how the horror and shock of combat led to his early discharge for "battle fatigue"—and left him emotionally scarred for life.

Heart of the Warrior movingly portrays the personal aftermath of war for two men: Bob Sampson, a former U.S. Army paratrooper who fought in Vietnam; and Nikolai Chuvanov, a former paratrooper in the Soviet Army who served in Afghanistan. Sampson and Chuvanov travel separately back to Vietnam and Afghanistan, where they relive their combat experiences. The veterans meet each other and form a powerful, healing bond.

Homecoming is the first Soviet-made documentary to explore the devastating effects of the Afghanistan War on Soviet soldiers. The parallels to the Vietnam experience of American soldiers are stunning: "Nobody asked my generation whether we should have this war or not," one Soviet veteran remarks bitterly in this video. *The Soviet Observer* wrote of *Homecoming*, "The camera observes the devastating results of the Afghan war on the bodies and souls of its veterans."

The Wounds of War series is useful for college-level and advanced high school courses in political science, history, psycololgy or peace studies; for veterans organizations or agencies, or for anyone interested in studying the human consequences of war. The VHS sale price of the series is $329 for institutions and $139 for individuals and low-income groups. The series is also available for rental.

The Video Project is a non-profit, distributor of social issue documentary videos and films focusing on the environment, war and peace, U.S.-Soviet relations, and other critical global concerns. To order this series, or for a free catalog, contact The Video Project, 5332 College Avenue, Suite 101, Oakland, CA, 94618, 1-800-475-2638.

Obituary

Steve Hawkins

Air Force veteran and former National Office staff member.

In February 1973, Steve and Gary Steiger (of VVAW's National Office for Service Counseling and the Military) traveled to Japan to represent VVAW at the invitation of Gensuikyo (the Japanese Council Against A & H Bombs). There Steve testified about American storage of nuclear weapons in Okinawa and Japan (which was specifically prohibited in treaties between the U.S. and Japan) as well as his munitions training while in the Air Force. After his return, he directed his attention to a number of gay rights activities.

Steve died in December, 1990 due to complications of AIDS.

VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR

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